

VZCZCXRO6219

OO RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDBU RUEHLH RUEHNEH RUEHPW
DE RUEHEK #0888/01 2181134

ZNY CCCCC ZZH

O 061134Z AUG 09

FM AMEMBASSY BISHKEK

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2547

INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE

RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3210

RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHDC

RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1500

RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE

RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3553

RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2939

RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS

RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP

RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 000888

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/30/2019

TAGS: PINT PGOV KG

SUBJECT: KYRGYZSTAN: ABUSE OF ADMINISTRATIVE RESOURCES IN
PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN, PART I

BISHKEK 00000888 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Classified By: Ambassador Tatiana Gfoeller, Reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In the run-up to the 2009 Presidential elections, the government of Kyrgyzstan used all its administrative resources to support President Bakiyev's campaign. The government leveraged its access to huge funding, thousands of state employees, a potent media machine, and wide-ranging facilities to promote the campaign of the President and ensure his victory. In the end, Bakiyev's use of state resources gave him an advantage in the election that the opposition was unable to overcome. This is Part I of two cables analyzing the run-up to the July 2009 Presidential Election. Part II, focusing on the pressure to vote on election day, will follow septel. END SUMMARY

PROMOTE THE PRESIDENT, OR ELSE!

¶2. (C) The President's re-election campaign was the central preoccupation for many government officials this year. The Director of the State Agency on Sports and Youth Aleksandr Voinov told EmbOff that "all ministers were instructed by the White House to be as active and high profile as possible in promoting the government before the election." Voinov, for his part, organized many sporting events around the country using government resources. These events, such as the "President's Cup" for kickboxing, featured large posters of the President and banners with slogans like: "Bakiyev is for sports. Sports are for Bakiyev." The Ministry of Education coordinated the timing of new school openings for Bakiyev to attend in his campaign travels.

¶3. (C) The Ministry of Culture put on free concerts where the President was praised by both government officials and entertainers. Some performers claim to have been paid in some cases, while others were promised different benefits or simply threatened to perform. One singer told EmbOff that she was approached jointly by the Bakiyev campaign and the

Ministry of Culture and asked to perform for the campaign. In return, she was promised government honors, along with better access to government facilities and media coverage in the future. She was told that her ability to perform at the major government-controlled concert halls would be restricted if she performed for the opposition.

¶4. (C) Media coverage in government-owned or controlled outlets, particularly on television, also focused on the President's campaign and portrayed him in a positive light. A reporter for the government-controlled Channel 5 said the station's leadership was warned by Oksana Malevannaya, the Chief of the Presidential Secretariat, that the channel's license would be revoked if the elections did not go well for Bakiyev. Scripts for the nightly news were sent directly from the White House to be read without changes on air. The White House also instructed Channel 5 to pool reporters and editors with two other supposedly independent TV stations to ensure there was a unified message on the news during the elections. Reporters were also ordered to give random people 200 soms (approximately USD 5) to appear on camera and say that they were voting for Bakiyev or were disappointed in the opposition.

¶5. (C) Tynai Ibragimov, the artistic director of the main, government-run KTR television channel, told EmbOff that he was hired to make Bakiyev look better on the news and the opposition candidates worse. He said that he was called "absolutely every day" by the White House Presidential Secretariat with feedback of how the President was shown on the news. For example, Bakiyev should only be filmed from the front, but opposition leaders should be shown often from the back. Ibragimov said the White House organized televised

BISHKEK 00000888 002.2 OF 002

Kyrgyz language tests and debates for the President to appear by himself or with one other candidate so his declining health could not be compared to others. Ibragimov was ordered to cut the live feed if any opposition candidate criticized Bakiyev too much.

¶6. (C) University and school officials are traditionally leaned on to support incumbent officials, but reported that the pressure was especially heavy this year. President Bakiyev signed an order transferring responsibility for the appointment of university rectors from faculty vote to himself. Three rectors confirmed that this makes them accountable for the political needs of the President. The rector of one large university said that he was called regularly by Daniyar Usenov, the chief of the Presidential Administration, with instructions on how to promote the Presidential campaign and even specific names of faculty members to fire who have not been supportive enough.

¶7. (C) A variety of other groups and instruments were exploited to support the campaign. The government raised pensions and salaries for its employees. It repainted many roads, and opened new squares and parks. Bishkek city mayor Nariman Tuleyev was particularly active in recent weeks, and even sent a letter to Bishkek residents giving credit for the new roads and parks to Bakiyev. Store and restaurant owners complained on Internet blogs of being forced to hang Bakiyev signs on their windows by campaign workers with the threat of police and tax inspection visits if they refused.

¶8. (C) An official from Gazprom Neft, which has a dominant share of the gasoline market in Kyrgyzstan, told EmbOff that his company agreed with the White House to keep prices artificially low until the election, at which point Gazprom could raise them to recoup their losses and more. Opposition candidates also complained of limited access to advertising in the media and on billboards, while commercial billboards and public spaces were blanketed with Bakiyev signs.

GFOELLER